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BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

BEFORE THE

HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the cooperative efforts between the Governments of Colombia and the United States to reduce the production of narcotics and other dangerous drugs and their flow from and through Colombia to the United States. The seizure by the U.S. Customs Service in Miami last month of almost two tons of cocaine hydrochloride, worth about a billion dollars on the street, dramatized again that the United States is the world's largest market for illegal drugs and Colombia is a major supplier of that market.

Colombia is the processor and distributor of up to 70 percent of the cocaine hydrochloride entering the United States. The DEA estimates that about thirty to thirty-one metric tons of cocaine successfully entered the U.S. from Colombia in 1981. Traditionally Colombia has processed and distributed cocaine paste or base produced in Bolivia and Peru. Recently,

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however, extensive areas in the eastern plains and other areas in Colombia have been dedicated to the cultivation of coca plants, which are converted into paste in simple laboratories close to the fields. Colombia has become a producer as well as a processor.

We estimate that Colombia also provides about 80 percent of the marijuana imported into the United States. DEA estimates that production in 1981 totalled about 50,000 tons., not all of which actually entered the U.S. Exports to the U.S. are down apparently at least in part because of increased production of high quality marijuana in the United States. Our explanation for this reduction is based primarily on anecdotal evidence, i.e., firsthand reports that the price of marijuana per pound "on the beach" in Colombia has fallen sharply in the last 18 months. While the price is down, we do not know yet by exactly how much.

Colombia is also a major source of illegal U.S. imports of . thaqualone or quaaludes. Our best estimate is that possibly as much as 90 percent of the U.S. illicit market is supplied by European

methaqualone processed into dosage units in Colombia. If the estimate is correct, Colombia is exporting about 36 metric tons to the U.S. annually.

The Colombia-U.S. drug trade is obviously the major problem for both countries. Drugs from Colombia damage the health of Americans, generate millions of dollars of illegal revenue for criminal organizations, and contribute to violent crime, particularly in areas such as Southern Florida. The profits Colombian drug traffickers earn from the vast U.S. market finance powerful criminal networks which corrupt Colombian institutions like cancer, even undermining the Government's monetary policies. The Colombian drug network is reputedly the best-organized, best-financed and most ruthless in Latin America.

Measures to deal with these explosive problems effectively must be taken in the context of close cooperation between the U.S. and Colombian governments. In our embassy in Bogota, eleven United States Government agencies are represented and one of my most important responsibilities is to coordinate and manage our overall anti-narcotics effort in Colombia. There we cannot act alone, of course. We can only support Colombian efforts, and our programs in Colombian can only be as effective as theirs.

The Operational Effort--Interdiction by Police Activity

One major aspect of our cooperation with Colombia is police activity aimed at narcotics interdiction. Interdiction activities essentially are joint endeavors between the Drug Enforcement Administration and Colombian law enforcement agencies designed to disrupt major narcotics trafficking networks and seize their personnel, funds and drugs. We have had a contingent from DEA or its predecessor in Colombia for ten years.

Recently our joint interdiction efforts have been quite successful. The two-ton cocaine seizure is one example. Another is the increase in marijuana and methaqualone seizures by Colombia law enforcement agencies; seizures of marijuana were up 345 percent and those of methaqualone 377 percent in 1981 over 1980. Operation Tiburon to interdict drug trafficking vessels in the Caribbean was yet another example of sucessful interdiction. In this regard, the United States received the full cooperation of the Colombian government. For instance, the Colombians authorized U.S. Coast Guard cutters to seize--including when necessary to use disabling fire--Colombian boats heading to the U.S. laden with marijuana.

The Development Effort--Helping Colombian Institutions

In addition to cooperation between the United States and Colombia on narcotics interdiction, there has been a major U.S. effort to help the Colombians develop the ability themselves to cope with all aspects of the narcotics problem. From 1973 through fiscal year 1981, the United States obligated approximately $32 million for projects in Colombia. The objective of these projects has been to assist in the upgrading of Colombian capabilities in intelligence collection, drug abuse prevention, judicial processing, interdiction and eradication. About three-quarters of the U.S. assistance has been in commodities. The remainder has gone for technical assistance and training.

Significant as our contributions have been, those of Colombia--chiefly personnel and equipment--have been greater, particularly in the context of Colombia's limited resources. The administration of President Turbay, which will end in August, has been especially cooperative in the anti-narcotics fight. The Colombian National Police has assumed primary responsibility for narcotics control, deploying more than 1,000 men to the field in special anti-

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narcotics units. Five tactical areas have been identified--the North Coast, the Gulf of Uraba near the Panamanian border, the Eastern plains or "Llanos", the Southwestern area, and the Peruvian/Ecuadorean Border. The Ministry of Defense remains the chief coordinator for narcotics enforcement measures and provides support to the police, especially in the form of fixed wing and helicopter airlift capacity from the Air Force. The Attorney General's air wing provides additional air support and his special judicial police initiated a campaign in 1981 to destroy coca plants and processing labs in the "Llanos". The Coast Guard and Navy roam offshore waters looking for drug runners. Over the years coordination among the various Colombian agencies has been impressive, as has been their cooperation with U.S. agencies.

An Updated Strategy

Where do we go from here? While we must continue and even increase our cooperative interdiction efforts, I am convinced that we must concentrate even more--in Colombia and elsewhere, such as Bolivia and Peru--on eradication in spite of real success in interdiction. We estimate that currently only about

ten percent of the marijuana destined for the U.S. from Colombia is seized. The figures for cocaine and quaaludes are probably in the range.

The most successful and cost effective way to end the drug scourge is to eradicate the raw materials from which drugs are fashioned. Plants in the ground are easier to find and destroy than smuggled drugs; bulk quantities of chemicals are easier to detect than tiny pills.

The experience of Mexico in eradicating marijuana and poppy cultivation by herbicidal spraying demonstrates the effectiveness of such an approach. As I have noted, the Government of Colombia has begun a manual coca eradication program and some in Colombia believe that a marijuana eradication program relying chiefly on herbicidal spraying would be the best approach. Others in Colombia disagree strongly.

In any case, several preconditions must be met before the U.S.goverment can propose a full-scale marijuana and coca eradication campaign to the Government of Colombia with any hope of success.

First, all legal requirements much be addressed. I understand that the Percy Amendment has been modified, lifting previous impediments to herbicidal spraying.

The Department of State is currently in the process of satisfying requirements established by the National Environmental Policy Act and Executive Order 12114. I understand that these requirements will take approximately five months to complete.

Second, the United States must be willing to provide significant resources to support any Colombian effort to eradicate. The recent modification of the Percy Amendment will help in this regard.

Third, and most important, the Colombian Government and people must be convinced the United States is as serious about curbing marijuana production within its own borders as it is in eradicating Colombian marijuana and coca cultivation. This means stronger legal measures against drugs and drug traffickers in the U.S., and above all the United States must spray its considerable domestic marijuana crops before it can credibly ask others to do so. If these conditions are met, I belive we can have an effective, cooperative, eradication program in Colombia.

The Cuban Connection

Since my last congressional testimony on the narcotics situation in Colombia, there has been a very startling development which seriously threatens

both the United States and Colombia: it is a matter of which this committee should be fully seized in the national interest.

The United States now has detailed and reliable evidence, as Ambassador Enders underlined in his March 12 testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, that intelligence officers of the Cuban government have been assisting Colombian narcotics traffickers in transporting drugs to the United States and using these same traffickers--their boats, planes, and personnel--to smuggle arms and guerrillas to Marxist terrorist groups dedicated to overthrowing Colombia's freely elected government.

I realize that this statement will generate a strong reaction from apologists for totalitarian Cuba and from those romantics who, as an act of faith, believe that every group of terrorists in Latin America somehow represent the downtrodden masses against oppression by an oligarchy. In Colombia, this construct is nonsense. There is nothing romantic about the killing, the robbing, and the kidnapping perpetrated on a daily basis by Colombian terrorist ("revolutionary") groups. There is nothing romantic about threats made against myself and my family

on a frequent basis. And there is nothing romantic about efforts by Cuban officials to use drug traffickers to send guns to Colombian terrorists dedicated to overthrowing a democratically elected and progressive Government in that country.

Any Cuban connection with drug traffickers as a vehicle for harming the United States and shipping arms clandestinely to Colombia and elsewhere to help terrorists destabilize democratic governments must be exposed, understood, admitted, and countered.

In conclusion, the United States government needs to reinvigorate its war on drugs. There is already an important example of this since the President created the Task Force on the Problems of Southern Florida headed by Vice President Bush. Although it will require hard work and patience, I am confident that with a serious, sincere, reciprocal and cooperative effort, we and the Colombians can dramatically reduce the drug trade between the two countries. Thank you.